

# Asian American Pacific Islander Communities in Washington State



*Vision: To create tobacco-free healthy Asian Pacific Islander communities*

*Mission: To develop community leadership for outreach, education, policy, and advocacy in tobacco control*

## Overview

- The Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) community represents more than 50 different ethnic subgroups, each with its own language, culture, and dialects.
- Smoking rates are as diverse as the AAPI community itself, varying from subgroup to subgroup. The lowest smoking rates are for Japanese (20 percent) and the highest rates (72 percent) for Laotians.
- Tobacco has been used to enhance native habits. For example, tobacco is often used in the Pacific Islands wrapped around betel nuts, a nut traditionally chewed like gum, but originally wrapped in the areca tree leaf.

## Key Accomplishments

- In 1997, members of the AAPI community began organizing the API Coalition Against Tobacco (APICAT) to address tobacco control issues. Membership includes representation from King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston Counties.
- In the spring of 2002, APICAT conducted a community assessment utilizing a key informant survey. Twenty-three people were interviewed representing the Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Lao, and Samoan communities.
- Seventeen representatives from the AAPI community have participated in the 2004 and 2005 Cross-Cultural Leadership Institute. APICAT provides participants with stipends to help them conduct tobacco control projects within their respective communities. The institute is a leadership development program to build community capacity to address tobacco control issues in the African American, Latino/Hispanic, LGBTQ, Native American, and Asian American Pacific Islander communities.
- In 2004, APICAT initiated a mini-contract program, which provided funds to help nine community-based organizations implement tobacco control activities. Projects included community-based cessation programs, secondhand smoke education, developing culturally relevant materials, and a youth hip hop event.

## Plans and Priorities

- APICAT will continue to build community capacity in tobacco control through leadership development, advocacy, research and data collection, and supporting culturally relevant tobacco control activities.